Al-Islam.org
Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project
Published on *Al-Islam.org* (https://www.al-islam.org)

Part 12: Special Logic of the Holy Qur'an

We previously said that the Muslim theologians started discussing and analyzing the question of human compulsion and liberty in the second half of the first century of the Hijri era. This question is the oldest scholastic problem. Somehow the scholastic theologians could not analyze the question correctly with the result that they deviated from the right path. Some of them supported the theory of predestination and others that of absolute human liberty. To the Muslim masses a belief in destiny meant predestination. They considered belief in human liberty to be tantamount to the negation of destiny. A simultaneous belief in destiny and liberty, though it was acceptable to the clear conscience of the early Muslims, lost its popularity once it took on a philosophical colour. Even now after a lapse of 14 centuries it does not find favour with the Muslim masses, though the Holy Qur'an, the hadiths of the Holy Prophet and the sayings of the Holy Imams clearly say that everything is governed by the destiny ordained by Allah, and at the same time describe man as an effective factor in making or marring his fortune. They hold him responsible for all his actions. We have in the foregoing quoted some of the Qur'anic verses dealing with these points.

As we have pointed out, the predestinarians have tried to explain away the verses indicating human freedom and the supporters of absolute liberty have tried to explain away the verses indicating that everything is divinely ordained. As we have seen actually there is no inconsistency between these two sets of verses. The riddle stands solved. The comprehensiveness of destiny does not necessarily mean that there is no such thing as destiny. As such the question of any contradiction between destiny and human volition does not arise, and there is no need to explain away anything.

For example the Qur'an says that it is Allah who guides the people to the right or the wrong path, who bestows on them honour, power and health and who provides them with the means of living: Even the virtue and the vice both have been ascribed to His Will.

The Holy Qur'an says: ***"It is Allah to leave in error whom He will and to guide whom He pleases. He is the Mighty, the Wise".*** (*Surah Ibrahim*, 14:4)

"Say: O Allah! Owner of Sovereignty! You bestow sovereignty on whomever you will and you withdraw sovereignty from whomever you will. You exalt whomever you will and you abase

whom you will. In Your hand is all that is good. No doubt you have power to do everything". (*Surah Aale Imran*, 3:26)

"Surely Allah is the provider of everything and the possessor of Mighty Power". (*Surah al-Zariyat*, 51:58)

"In the heaven is your providence and that which you are promised". (*Surah al-Zariyat*, 51:22)

The Holy Qur'an quotes Ibrahim as having said: ***"He gives me food and drink. If I fall sick, He cures me. He will cause me to die, and will bring me back to life".*** (*Surah al-Shu'ara'*, 26:79 – 81)

About the happy and the evil things the Qur'an says: ***"Say: Everything is from Allah".*** (*Surah al-Nisa*, 4:78)

But these verses do not deny the intervention of the natural causes. Hence there is no contradiction between them and the other verses which clearly show that it is man himself who chooses the right or the right or the wrong path, acquires power and honour, and earns his livelihood.

For example, the Qur'an says: ***As for Thamud, We showed them the right path, but they preferred blindness to guidance, consequently they were bit by the humiliating punishment of a dreadful noise which they deserved because of their misdeeds".*** (*Surah Fussilat*, 41:17)

Referring to the downfall of Pharaoh's gang, the Holy Qur'an says: ***"That is because Allah does not withdraw the favour He has bestowed on any people unless they first change what is in their hearts, and that is because Allah is Hearer, Knower".*** (*Surah al-Anfal*, 8:53)

Criticizing the predestinarian belief of the pagan Arabs, the Holy Qur'an says: ***"When it is said to them: Give in charity out of what Allah has provided you, the disbelievers say to those who believe: Are we to feed those whom Allah would feed if He willed? Surely you are in a clear error".*** (*Surah Yasin*, 36:47)

Again the Holy Qur'an says: ***"Corruption has become rife in land and sea because of the misdeeds of the people".*** (*Surah al-Rum*, 30:41)

The fact is, as already pointed out, that Allah's Will, His Knowledge and His Decrees do not nullify the system of causation. Actually this whole infinite system springs from His Will and Knowledge and its effectiveness means the effectiveness of His Will.

On this basis it is wrong to say which act is Allah's and which is not His. Such a division is meaningless. If an act has been ascribed to some other being, it cannot be said that it is not Allah's. The division of work between the Creator and the created is wrong. Any act of a doer is that of Allah also.

There is a hadith in the Tuhaf-ul-Uqul, which appears to be a letter written by Imam Hadi (a), the tenth

Imam, to some of his supporters in Ahwaz (Iran) on the doctrines of predestination, absolute discretion and justice. In this letter he writes:

“A person asked Imam Ali (a) whether man has power and ability or he lacks them. If he has the power to do things, then how is it possible to say that there is no power nor help but from Allah?”

From the wording of the hadith it appears that the questioner believed that man had the power and ability to do things, Hence he was unable to understand how the question of Allah’s Will and Divine Decree could fit in.

In reply the Imam said to him: “You asked about ability. Do you have this ability with Allah or without Him!” The questioner was baffled. The Imam said: “If you assert that you and Allah share this ability and power, I would put you to death (because you would be claiming to be a co-partner of Allah). If you say that you have this ability without Allah, again I would put you to death (because you would be presuming that you are independent of Allah. Such a presumptions again infidelity, for independence in any affair means independence in essence).

“The questioner said: Then what should I say?”

The Imam (a) said: “You have ability by the Will of Allah, while He has it independently. If He endows you with it, that is His favour. If He takes it away from you, that means He is testing you. In any case, you should remember that whatever He bestows on you, He is still its owner. If He enables you to do a thing, that thing is still within His power”.

In short, this hadith indicates that while an effect is ascribed to its cause, it is attributable to Allah also. When we ascribe an act to its normal and natural doer, we ascribe it to its non-self-existing agent, and when we attribute it to Allah, we ascribe it to its self-existing agent. It is Allah who endows things with the power and quality of producing an effect. It is He who bestows the ownership of anything on anyone. But there is one basic difference between the bestowal of ownership by Allah and the transfer of ownership by a man. After a man has transferred the ownership of a thing, it is no longer his property.

But Allah continues to be the owner of a thing even after He has bestowed it on anyone else. His bestowal is not inconsistent with His continued ownership. It is only a manifestation of His being the owner. Similarly Allah endows things with the quality of producing an effect, and at the same time He is the Master of all effects. There are many other hadiths which support this view.

Source URL:
https://www.al-islam.org/man-and-his-destiny-murtadha-mutahhari/part-12-special-logic-holy-quran#comment-0